

Questions & Answers Survey & Manage Draft Supplemental EIS

Questions & Answers

Q) Why are the BLM and the Forest Service (agencies) proposing to remove the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines?

The impacts and costs of implementing Survey and Manage have been much greater than anticipated in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. The Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines are preventing many Northwest Forest Plan timber sales from moving forward and restricting forest health treatments such as hazardous fuels reduction.

The decision to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) and the Proposed Action come as a result of the settlement that was reached between the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Douglas Timber Operators regarding a lawsuit. The Survey and Manage provisions were the subject of a lawsuit by Douglas Timber Operators (DTO) who claim the Agencies protection measures are excessive and unwarranted because they violate the Oregon and California Lands (O&C) Act and are beyond the authorities or intent of the National Forest Management Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Endangered Species Act. In particular DTO claimed that the protection of every species site amounted to the creation of additional “reserves” without going through the NEPA process and in violation of O&C Act.

Q) If you remove the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines, how will the Survey and Manage species be managed?

Survey and Manage species that qualify will be added to the agencies’ Special Status Species Programs.

Q) What are Special Status Species Programs?

Special Status Species Programs is the term, used in the Survey and Manage SEIS, that collectively refers to both the Forest Service Sensitive Species program and the BLM Special Status Species program. The Forest Service Sensitive Species program and BLM Special Status Species program are based on national policies. Both programs seek to further the objectives of the Endangered Species Act by preventing future listings of species as threatened or endangered, and both programs require coordination with state and other federal agencies to achieve conservation goals of species identified by state governments. The objectives of the Forest Service’ Sensitive Species Program also include compliance with National Forest Management Act regulations requiring diversity of plant and animal communities, and requiring habitat to be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired nonnative vertebrate species.

Q) How are Survey and Manage and Special Status Species Programs different?

The objective of both Survey and Manage and Special Status Species Programs is to conserve species. Survey and Manage is a mitigation measure adopted in the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision in 1994. The objective of Survey and Manage is to conserve rare and little known species that were thought to be associated with Late-Successional and Old-growth forests in the Northwest Forest Plan area. The Survey and Manage program is managed by a staff in Portland, Oregon. They prepare Survey Protocols and Management Recommendations the field offices are required to follow. The Special Status Species Programs are national policies adopted in the 1980's. They apply to all lands managed by the agencies and include any species that qualify, not just those associated with Late-Successional and Old-growth forests.

The objectives of the Special Status Species Program are to ensure that actions approved, authorized or funded by the agencies do not contribute to the need to list species under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM and Forest Service programs each have a national staff in Washington DC as well as small staffs in Portland. Line Officers and the specialists that work for them must determine what species a project might effect, what information is needed to determine impact to a species, document potential impacts and affirm in their decision that the action will not contribute to the need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act.

Q) Is there more than one policy for the Special Status Species Programs?

Yes, each agency has their own policy. The Forest Service national policy is found in Forest Service Manual 2670 and the BLM national policy is found in BLM Manual 6840. In addition each Region of the Forest Service and each State Office of the BLM have provided supplemental guidance. Copies of all of the policies can be found at <http://www1.or.blm.gov/surveyandmanage/>.

Q) What are Special Status Species?

As used in this SEIS, the term "Special Status Species" refers only to the following species categories that are included under agency species conservation policies:

- Oregon/Washington BLM: Bureau Assessment, and Bureau Sensitive (BLM Manual 6840; Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2003-054; Instruction Memorandum No. OR-91-57).
- California BLM: Bureau Sensitive (BLM Manual 6840; Manual Supplement 6840.06, Plant Management).
- Forest Service Region 5: Sensitive (Forest Service Manual 2670).
- Forest Service Region 6: Sensitive (Forest Service Manual 2670).

Q) How do species become Special Status Species?

The primary basis for adding species is information obtained from State Natural Heritage Programs and State Agencies responsible for wildlife and botanical resources. The decision to add a species is made by the Regional Forester or State Director based on factors such as the agency's capability to significantly affect the conservation status of the species and whether there is sufficient information on habitat relationships and life history to evaluate potential effects.

Q) What are the agencies required to do for Special Status Species?

The Line Officer for a project must determine that the project will not contribute to a listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Before making that determination information about the species in the project area must be gathered and analyzed in the Environmental Assessment or the Biological Evaluation.

Q) Are the agencies required to manage sites known to be occupied by Special Status Species?

Only those sites that are necessary to ensure the agency actions will not contribute to the need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act must be managed for the benefit of the species.

Q) Will the proposed action reduce protection for rare species?

The proposed action would somewhat reduce protection since not all species are likely to be included in the Special Status Species Programs or they may not be included in all of their range. This is due to the fact that there are different criteria for including species in Survey and Manage versus Special Status Species Programs. This reduced protection can be eliminated through mitigation measures. Mitigation measures include continuing to manage known sites and conducting pre-project clearance surveys for species that require pre-disturbance surveys. Analysis shows there would be no more species at high risk of extirpation under the proposed action with mitigation than under the existing Survey and Manage mitigation measure.

Q) Why are you proposing to manage some Survey and Manage species under the BLM and Forest Service Special Status Species Programs? If they provide adequate protections, why weren't they used in 1994?

The Forest Service' Sensitive Species Program and the Bureau of Land Management's Special Status Species Program seek to further the objectives of the Endangered Species Act by preventing future listings of species as threatened or endangered. Both programs require coordination with state and other federal agencies to achieve conservation goals of species identified by state governments. The objectives of the Forest Service' Sensitive Species Program also include compliance with National Forest Management Act regulations requiring diversity of plant and animal communities, and requiring habitat to be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species.

These are national programs that have been in place since the 1980's. For both agencies, standards for including species in the Special Status Species Programs are established at the National level through their respective directives systems. Generally, these programs provide for management of species sites and inventories, surveys or monitoring. Pre-project clearances are completed prior to habitat-disturbing activities to determine the presence of a species or its habitat and the effect of management actions on the species. This information is used to determine the appropriate management for species.

When the 1994 Record of Decision was signed for the Northwest Forest Plan, the agencies felt that a separate Survey and Manage program for little known and rare species was necessary. Now that the agencies have had experience implementing the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines and gathered additional data on the little known and rare species, they believe a

combination of mitigation measures and inclusion of some of the Survey and Manage species into Special Status Species program will provide adequate protections for the species.

Q) Are there any species that are currently on both the Special Status Species lists and the Survey and Manage list?

Yes, there are approximately 36 species that are currently on both lists. The agencies have chosen to manage these species under Survey and Manage to avoid duplication of effort.

Q) Would the red tree vole receive protection as a Special Status Species?

The Red Tree Vole would be a special status specie for both the Forest Service and BLM only in the north Coast Range of Oregon. The red tree vole would receive no special management consideration in the remainder of its range.

Q) Will the proposed action lead to listings under the Endangered Species Act?

This is unknown since only the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determines if species are Threatened or Endangered. However, new listings are not anticipated since our analysis shows that no species are at high risk of extirpation under the proposed action with mitigation than are currently at high risk under the existing Survey and Manage mitigation measure.

Q) Will the proposed action result in harvest of old growth forests?

The proposed action does not authorize any timber harvest. It is anticipated that the action would improve the agencies' ability to meet all the objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan. One of those objectives is to ensure a sustainable supply of timber from federal forests. Since 1994 on average, the agencies' annual timber sale offerings have been 60% of the amount predicted in the Northwest Forest Plan.

Under the Northwest Forest Plan, approximately 86% of late-successional forest (6.9 million out of 8 million acres) is in reserves. The remaining late-successional forest (approximately 1.1 million acres) is located in the Matrix and Adaptive Management Area Land Use Allocations and is available for timber harvest. The proposed action does not change these allocations.

Q) How long is the comment period, and where can I obtain a copy of the DSEIS?

The public comment period for the draft Environmental Impact Statement is 90-days. It begins on May 23, 2003, and ends on August 22, 2003. The document is available on request from the Survey and Manage SEIS Team, P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208. It can also be accessed directly on the Internet at <http://www.or.blm.gov/nwfpnepa/>.